

THE RELIGIOUS AND THE CURE OF SOULS IN MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND

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I

THE appropriation of parish churches to religious houses went far towards solving the problem of their endowment, but nevertheless presented these houses with the problem of providing parochial ministrations for the churches so annexed. No matter how lightly an appropriating body took its responsibilities, this problem had to be faced.

By the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, the position was made quite clear insofar it was enacted that where a church was appropriated, then care should be taken "to have a perpetual vicar canonically instituted, who . . . should have a fit portion of the profits of the church."¹ Thereafter, the previous anomalous local solutions to the problem of service were standardised and vicarage ordinations proceeded apace. As far as annexed churches were concerned the vicar-perpetual became the normal parochial incumbent until he in turn was frequently superseded in the fourteenth century by the vicar-pensioner.

One of the previous solutions to the problem of serving appropriated churches, which apparently suffered by this change, was the practice of regulars serving annexed churches in their own person. Indeed, the decree of 1215 has been looked upon as a measure which brought to an end, for the time being, the encroachment of regulars into the parochial field.² Both points require further examination and modification, however, as it is not all certain, in the first place, that service by regulars was particularly prevalent before 1215, nor is it confirmed that the practice, as far as it did exist, was terminated at this date.³

In an examination of both questions, careful distinction has to be drawn between monks—whose work of prayer was normally confined to the monastery, and the canons regular who, though adopting the communal way of life, were "completely in theory and largely in practice a clerical

¹ Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. 22, col. 1019—Canon 32.

² Hartridge, *Vicarages in the Middle Ages*, 162.

³ This question is critically examined in Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons*, Chapter vi, i, *passim*.

order.”¹ Thus, while isolated examples of monks serving parish churches during the eleventh century can be found, they are far from common.² By the beginning of the twelfth century, moreover, the practice was being explicitly condemned, it being enacted at the Council of Poitiers in 1100 that:

“No monks shall presume to exercise the parochial ministry of priests, that is to baptise, to preach, to give penance.”³

Subsequent councils of the Church made similar enactments,⁴ and the Third Lateran Council of 1179 ordered monks, in such cases, to present priests to the bishop, who should make these priests responsible for the cure of souls.⁵ Such legislation appears to have had the desired effect and while monks can subsequently be found holding parochial cures, it was only through a special dispensation which appears to have been rarely sought or granted.⁶

The erection of a vicarage system had, therefore, little, or no effect on the service of parochial cures by monks, but this is not the case as far as the canons regular are concerned. The claim made by canons regular to undertake parochial work was not unchallenged, however, and it was only after a considerable struggle that their claim was recognised.⁷ The theoretical basis for this recognition was not particularly strong, but in general, it would appear that whereas the monk was looked upon as one who had renounced the world, and lived a cloistered life, the canon, although devoting himself to similar objectives, was regarded as a priest who had adopted a rule.

Although the claims of the canons regular did not pass unchallenged, the battle had been won before the dawn of the twelfth century, and the selfsame Council of Poitiers in 1100, which had enacted that monks were not to undertake parochial ministrations, decreed that regular clerks could with their bishop's consent, “baptise, preach, give penance and bury the dead.”⁸ Although an important landmark in establishing the right of regular canons to undertake parochial work, it would appear that this decree merely confirmed an existing situation. Nevertheless, such a statement of principle would inevitably quell any remaining opposition.⁹

¹ *The Origins of the Austin Canons*, 214.

² *Ibid.*, 215 and n.

³ Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. xx, col. 1124.

⁴ This is summarised by U. Berlière in *Revue bénédictine*, vol. 39, 343-8 (Dickinson, *op. cit.*, 220n).

⁵ Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. xxii., col. 397.

⁶ *Infra*, pp. 228-9.

⁷ Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons*, 214-21.

⁸ Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. xx, cols. 1123-4.

⁹ Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons*, 221.

The right of canons regular to serve churches was scarcely questioned thereafter and later conciliar legislation was not concerned with reiterating the right, but with defining the conditions under which it might be put into practice.

To whatever extent canons regular had served parishes before 1100,¹ however, it is certain that with the statutory recognition accorded to their claims in that year, the practice greatly increased.² In this service, the Augustinian canons came to be joined in the course of the twelfth century by the Premonstratensians, who, although forbidden by their initial statutes to accept *altaria ad que cura animarum pertinet, nisi possit esse abbatia*,³ were soon to be found serving churches in which no community was to be established. As a result, the statute in question was omitted from the revised statutes of c.1174, and about the same period the Premonstratensians are described as *praedicatores et rectores ecclesiarum*.⁴

Nevertheless, while it is incontrovertible that in the course of the twelfth century, both Augustinian and Premonstratensian canons were authorised to serve parish churches, and it is likewise true to state that many parish churches were being granted to houses of canons regular at this very period, it cannot be assumed, as it has been too frequently in the past, that almost all such appropriated churches were being personally served by canons regular, and that it was not until the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, and the spate of vicarage ordinations which followed, that the practice abated, or even temporarily ceased.⁵

It is certainly true that certain churches were being served by canons regular but these were probably only a minority of the total held. Lack of record is undoubtedly a major handicap in this respect, but the historian cannot argue from silence, and nothing is more certain than the fact that the situation which came to exist in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries cannot be taken as a guide to that which prevailed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Indeed, while the monasteries were rich and continuing to receive endowments, there was little or no need for canons to serve churches in person, as it was easier to hire a secular priest. Furthermore, in the early centuries at least, the true religious verve

¹ The opposition aroused by their activities makes it clear that canons were so engaged, but no idea as to the extent can readily be gained (Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons*, 214-21).

² *Ibid.*, 221-3.

³ *Analectes de l'ordre de Prémontré*, ix (1913), 45 (cited : Colvin, *The White Canons in England*, 8).

⁴ *Novus Thesaurus Anecdotorum*, v. cols. 1614-20 (cited : Colvin, *op. cit.*, 8).

⁵ Hartridge, *Vicarages in the Middle Ages*, 162.

would make it likely that a canon regular would wish to serve God by prayer in his monastery, rather than by serving a parochial cure.

As far as England is concerned there is little definite proof that either the Black or White canons were serving their parish churches in person in the twelfth century, although this was undoubtedly happening in a small number of cases.¹ The vicarage ordinations which proceeded apace during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, would undoubtedly reduce this number even further. The practice would never appear to have ceased,² however, and in one respect the creation of a vicarage system may actually have promoted the service of churches by canons regular, for whereas there had been little incentive to serve such cures in person, as long as mercenary priests could be utilised, the prospect of a vicarage ordination, and the consequent loss to the monastery of valuable tithes, must have prompted some houses of canons regular to claim their right to serve certain parishes by their own members.

The right to serve parish churches had been finally established at the Council of Poitiers, and thereafter this right remained unchallenged.³ The conditions under which this might be put into operation were, however, the subject of frequent concern. In general, it was stipulated that the control of the bishop over such parish churches must not be impaired, and consequently canons nominated to serve in parish churches had to be presented to the diocesan for institution, and be responsible to him in spiritual matters.⁴ Although, moreover, it was understood that canons regular might serve parish churches, the right to do so came to depend upon a dispensation,⁵ and once again limitations might be established. The most important of these general limitations was that imposed, first of all on particular houses, and then in general on both orders, that canons serving parish churches were not to do so without companions.⁶ This principle was enunciated at the Third Lateran Council of 1179,⁷ although it had been already imposed upon individual houses, and was repeated in 1188 in a general privilege applying to the Premonstratensian order.⁸

¹ Dickinson, *The Origins of the Austin Canons*, Chapter vi, i, *passim*; Colvin, *The White Canons in England*, 275-80.

² Dickinson, *op. cit.*, 237-8; Colvin, *op. cit.*, 278.

³ *Supra*, pp. 216-7.

⁴ Dickinson, *Origins of the Austin Canons*, 234, cites examples illustrating this safeguard.

⁵ A bull of Urban IV in 1261 states Premonstratensians might serve cures 'by our special indulgence' (Colvin, *The White Canons in England*, 23, citing Le Paige, *Bibliotheca Premonstratensis Ordinis*, 688).

⁶ Dickinson, *op. cit.*, 234-5; Colvin, *op. cit.*, 277.

⁷ Mansi, *Concilia*, vol. xxii, col. 224.

⁸ Le Paige, *op. cit.*, 642.

The idea behind the enactments decreeing that a solitary canon should not serve a parish church was to prevent the exposure of such a canon to special spiritual dangers, but from the point of view of the houses themselves, however, it was clearly impossible to send three or four canons to each parish church annexed to the monastery. If they did so, conventual life would become virtually non-existent. Another reason, therefore, presents itself for doubting whether, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, there was ever a large number of parish churches being served by canons regular at any one time. Most churches annexed to houses of canons regular were possibly served by a canon at some time or another, if permission for this type of service had been given, but certainly after the thirteenth century, during the course of which, permission became essential, it was more frequently the case that specific churches were normally served in this way, and the other churches held by the house were served by secular vicars.¹

The proviso that canons serving parish churches should be accompanied by fellow canons does not appear to have survived the fourteenth century, and this factor, taken in conjunction with the growing economic difficulties of the religious houses at that period, apparently led to an increase in the number of churches served by canons regular.² Even then, however, it is extremely doubtful whether even half of the parish churches held by houses of canons regular were served in this way, but until a definitive study of this particular question is presented, no ready solution to this problem can be given.

II

The position in Scotland does not appear to have differed greatly from that outlined above. There is little definite proof that regulars were engaged in the cure of souls before the beginning of the thirteenth century, although it is possible that such a method of service was being employed, and given up in the face of episcopal insistence upon vicarage ordination in the years following the Fourth Lateran Council.

In favour of this point of view, is evidence such as that met with in a vicarage settlement of 1268 with reference to the churches of Kilrenny, Saltoun, Gullane and Channelkirk—all of which were annexed to Dryburgh, and to the canons of which, Bishop Gameline of St. Andrews, gave permission to serve in person "as formerly they had been wont," if the

¹ Dickinson, *Origins of the Austin Canons*, 234-241, and Colvin, *The White Canons in England*, 278-280, come to similar conclusions on these various problems.

² Colvin, *op. cit.*, 280.

secular vicars gave trouble to the abbey.¹ The previous privileges referred to by the bishop no doubt included one of Pope Lucius III dated 8th May, 1184, which having confirmed the abbey's rights in certain named churches went on to authorise that the canons might:

*"In parochialibus vero ecclesiis quas habetis licent vobis quatuor vel tres minus de canonicis vestris ponere quorum unus diocesano episcopo presentur ut ei de spiritualibus vobis autem de temporalibus et de ordinis observancia respondere."*²

A similar concession had been made by the same Pope to the priory of St. Andrews in the previous year, and was to be repeated by his successors.³ The granting of such a privilege does not, however, prove that advantage was being taken of it, and little or no evidence can be produced that such a procedure was being adopted. Furthermore for reasons already adduced, it is apparent that this privilege could only have possessed limited application.⁴ Indeed, as far as Scotland is concerned, apart from the fact that the priory of Canonbie may have come into existence in this fashion,⁵ the only positive example which can be produced is from the mid-fourteenth century when it is related that in the year 1356, two canons of Holyrood were carried off from the parish church of Whitekirk, which was annexed to their abbey.⁶

It would appear in fact that as in England, in the period before the thirteenth century, that while canons regular were apparently serving churches, annexed to their houses, this was by no means common and the use of mercenary priests proved much more attractive.⁷ This is borne out by the fact that Papal concessions to houses of canons regular frequently contain the right to have annexed churches served by suitable chaplains. This occurs in concessions to the priory of St. Andrews, which also contain the right to serve such churches by three or four canons,⁸ while a charter of Richard, bishop of St. Andrews (1165—78) to Scone contains the privilege of serving six of its churches by removeable chaplains, but makes no mention of service by the canons themselves.⁹

¹ Dryburgh, no. 40. ² *Ibid.*, no. 249.

³ *Reg. Prior. Sancti Andree*, 61, 65, 70, 75, 79, 101.

⁴ *Supra*, pp. 217-8.

⁵ It is possible that the original gift by Turgot de Rosdale to Jedburgh was of a parish church, which eventually became a priory with cure (*Nat. MSS. of Scotland*, i, no. 38; *Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis*, no. 114; Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England*, 596-7).

⁶ *Scotichronicon*, Lib. xiv. cap. xiii, xiv.

⁷ *Supra*, p. 217.

⁸ *Reg. Prior Sancti Andree*, 65, 70, 74, 79, 101.

⁹ *Scon*, no. 48.

Only in cases where the foundation possessed a parochial altar, as at Holyrood,¹ or possessed the church of the parish within which it lay, as at St. Andrews where the priory held the church of Holy Trinity,² would it be apparently safe to say that canons regular were serving the cure in person. Even in these instances, however, one cannot be certain as the presence of properly ordained vicarages in both instances at a later date, would appear to indicate that at some time in the past, a secular priest had originally undertaken service at the parochial altars.³

It would appear, therefore, that in Scotland, as elsewhere, service by regulars was not widespread, and although concessions to serve parish churches had been granted, the conditions under which this might be undertaken were not particularly attractive. The use of removeable chaplains was, on the other hand, beneficial, and although record is extremely silent on these questions, this would appear to have been the method utilised.

The effect of the establishment of properly ordained vicarages in the course of the thirteenth century was to render this method of service almost impossible, and consequently, houses of canons regular may have reverted to the alternative of serving parish churches by their own members. Hence, the effect of the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council, possibly was of not reducing service by regulars, but of actually increasing it.

As has been noted,⁴ both Augustinians and Premonstratensians had established their right to serve parish churches in the course of the twelfth century, but individual dispensations for each church to be served in this manner came to be required by the thirteenth century.⁵ Hence the anxiety of the canons of Dryburgh to have their previous privileges confirmed, even when vicarage settlements were being enacted. Thus, when Bishop Gameline of St. Andrews in 1268 laid down the payment to be made to secular vicars, a loophole whereby seculars could be replaced by regulars was provided by the stipulation that:

"If perchance it happen that the foresaid abbot and convent at any time, without due cause, are given trouble by the said vicars, or by any our successors, contrary to the above decision of ours, our will for ourselves and our successors is that it be allowed to the said abbot and convent to serve the said parish churches by their own canons, just as formerly they have been wont . . ."⁶

¹ *Prot. Book of James Young*, no. 55.

² *Reg. Prior Sancti Andree*, 155, 171-2.

³ Books of Assumptions, (GRH), fos. 101, 106v.

⁴ *Supra*, pp. 216-7.

⁵ *Supra*, pp. 218-9.

⁶ *Dryburgh*, no. 40.

Even by this date, however, the canons of Dryburgh had taken steps to ensure that their right to serve annexed churches by canons was assured, and in 1242, David de Bernham, bishop of St. Andrews had enacted that the canons of Dryburgh on account of financial suffering caused by their hospitality to the poor and guests as well as the accumulation of debts caused by the building of the monastery might present to the bishop:

“One of their canons . . . as a vicar who may receive from us and our successors, the cure of souls so that the fruits of these churches may go to the use of the convent for whose support our predecessors with pious devotion granted these churches.”¹

Advantage was no doubt taken of these, and similar privileges, to present canons to vicarages, especially once the requirement that each canon so presented should have companions with him, had passed into oblivion. The incentive to present a canon was, moreover, all the greater once a formal vicarage ordination had taken place, as unless a vicarage appropriation could be engineered, no other means of obtaining the vicarage revenues might present itself. Thus, while before a vicarage ordination had taken place, a mercenary priest might be presented, with the passing of this opportunity the temptation to serve annexed churches by canons regular was all the greater.

This practice, moreover, undoubtedly increased in the course of the fourteenth century when the effects of the Wars of Independence and the Schism gave to the canons regular the incentive and the opportunity to reduce their burden of poverty. In certain cases, the vicarage appears to have been actually appropriated, and the cure served thereafter by a canon,² or in certain instances by a chaplain,³ although normally when a canon served a cure, it was because the vicarage had not been annexed.

Many instances could be cited in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of parish churches being served by canons regular, but a few examples must suffice.

Inchcolm appears to have served four of its six churches in this fashion,⁴

¹ *Dryburgh*, no. 38.

² In 1454, it is asserted that the perpetual vicarages of Falkirk and Kinghorn are appropriated to Holyrood and served by canons as perpetual vicars (CPR—Letters, x 711). Likewise, the vicarage pensionary of Redgorton was served by a canon (GRH. Ch. no. 162).

³ At periods in the sixteenth century, Liff, Longcastle and Mochrum were all served in this fashion. (Prot. Book of Duncan Gray (GRH), fo. 6; *Wigtownshire Charters*, no. 126; PRO, 31/9-33, *Diversorum*, Paul III (1539-40) fo. 14).

⁴ Aberdour, Dalgety, Dollar, Leslie (the evidence for these, and the subsequent citation of parishes will be found in the author's unpublished Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis on the Appropriation of Parish Churches in Medieval Scotland—Appendices I and II. It is proposed that the list of parishes contained therein will eventually be published.

although not always without difficulty, as in one instance at least, that of Dalgety, the abbey's right to do so was hotly disputed. This disagreement which broke out about 1420 was between Inchcolm on one hand, and the bishop of Dunkeld on the other.¹ The bishop had evidently appointed a secular priest to the vicarage "to the no little loss and harm of the abbot and the convent." In spite of a papal command to desist, the bishop appears to have remained adamant, and although the immediate outcome of the struggle is unknown, the abbey had ceased to present a canon by the sixteenth century when a secular priest is found in possession of the vicarage.²

Such intrusions by secular priests into vicarages, usually held by canons regular, would appear to have been fairly frequent in the fifteenth century, and this fact makes it extremely difficult to assess the number of vicarages served by canons regular.³ Nevertheless, the fact that danger from secular intruders did exist did make houses of canons regular frequently petition the Papacy for confirmation of their privileges in respect of churches served in this way and such lists provide a fairly reliable guide to the churches served in this fashion.

Thus, in 1470 the abbot of Holyrood petitioned the Pope to the effect that as the vicarages of Falkirk, Tranent, St. Cuthbert, Kinghorn, Barra, Kinneil, Urr, Balmaghie and Kirkcudbright, had been wont from time immemorial to be held by the Augustinian canons of Holyrood, it might be confirmed that only canons of the abbey might hold the said parish churches, or vicarages.⁴

As well as illustrating the constant fear of secular intrusion, the petition lists nine parish churches served by the canons of Holyrood, and consequently indicates the incidence of this practice at the time when it was at its height. Moreover, as far as can be ascertained from a study of the other parish churches annexed to the abbey,⁵ this represents the sum total of churches served in this way. When it is considered that twenty-five churches were annexed to the abbey, and that although a few of these, such as Corstorphine⁶ and Liberton⁷ which were initially chapels, may have been served by canons at one time, the total number

¹ *Scottish Supplications to Rome*, i 195; *Inchcolm*, no. xlvi.

² *Ibid*, no. lxvi; *Register of the Great Seal* iv, no. 2487.

³ *Scottish Supplications to Rome*, i 88-9; *CPR—Letters*, x 504; xiii 295.

⁴ *CPR—Letters*, xii. 217-8.

⁵ The totals given for churches annexed to religious houses are drawn from the author's unpublished Ph.D. thesis—Appendix II.

⁶ *Lib. S. Crucis*, no. 1; *Reg. of Supplications*, 441, fo. 156v.

⁷ *Lib. S. Crucis*, no. 1.

of churches, including that of the abbey itself, which were ever served by canons, could never have exceeded fifty per cent. of the total.

The situation at other houses of canons regular would appear to suggest the same conclusions. The priory of St. Andrews would appear to have served only a small proportion of its annexed churches by its own canons, only those of Dull, Fowlis-Easter, Kilgour, Leuchars, Longforan and St. Andrews itself, of the twenty-five churches pertaining to the priory, definitely having been served in this manner.¹ Scone, on the other hand, appears to have served five of its eleven churches, and the pendicles of Invergowrie and Liff by its canons.² An even higher proportion were evidently served by canons of Whithorn, who held eight vicarages out of a possible fourteen,³ although in at least two instances—Longcastle and Mochrum, the cures were served on occasions not by canons, but by curates employed by them.⁴ In the case of Dryburgh, however, only four of the twelve parish churches held by the abbey appear to have been served by canons and even in these cases, service appears to have been intermittent.⁵

In some of the houses with fewer annexed churches, and which were consequently possibly more impoverished than the larger foundations, the percentage of parish churches served by canons does appear to have been considerably higher. Thus, the abbey of Holywood, which only possessed five parish churches, served at least four of them by its own canons.⁶ Souleseat, would likewise have appeared to have served both its churches of Souleseat and Kirkmaiden in Rhinns by its own canons, while Tongland served three of its five churches in the same fashion.⁷

The number of churches served in this way has possibly been vastly overestimated in the past, and while the number was undoubtedly considerably, it is doubtful whether even fifty per cent. of the churches annexed to houses of canons regulars were ever served in this way. Exact figures are difficult to determine, however, as few churches were consistently served in this fashion, and examples can be found of churches being indeterminately served by canons and seculars, each of whom probably regarded the other as intruders. At Logie Dundee, for example,

¹ Unpublished Ph.D. thesis—Appendices I and II.

² Cambusmichael, Logie—Dundee, Logierait, Redgorton, Scone.

³ Borge, Clayshant, Cruggleton, Gelston, Kirkmichael, Longcastle, Mochrum, Tosherton.

⁴ *Wigtownshire Charters*, 126; PRO 31/9—33, Diversorum, Paul III (1539-40), fo.14.

⁵ Gullane, Lessudden, Mertoun, Pencaitland.

⁶ Dunscore, Kirkconnel, Penpont, Tynron.

⁷ Minnigaff, Sennick, Tongland.

it was reported in 1450/1 that the vicarage "although from time immemorial wont to be assigned to secular priests and clerks has . . . been for sixteen years detained by Augustinian canons regular."¹ Later in the same year, however, it was claimed by the abbey that the church was "wont to be ruled by canons."² In another case the church of Minnigaff is said to be detained by a pseudo-canon, rather than by a true canon of Tongland, to which the church was annexed.³ The houses themselves do not appear to have been consistent in their service of such churches, moreover, and it is important to note that the cure of souls by a regular was always optional and never obligatory.⁴ Thus, when Thomas Scot, a canon of Holywood, became unfit to govern his vicarage of Penpont in 1469, he was allowed to choose a fit priest, secular or regular as his co-adjutor.⁵

The service of parish churches by regulars appears to have reached its height in the fifteenth century, and appears to have been on the wane by the following century. As has been noted,⁶ the Augustinian canons of Holyrood personally served the parish churches of Barra and Tranent in the fifteenth century, but both churches appear to have been served by secular vicars near the Reformation.⁷ Similarly, although a canon of Dryburgh was presented to the vicarage of Gullane in 1468, when the cure was "wont to be governed by canons thereof,"⁸ the charge evidently passed to seculars in the century thereafter.⁹

This wane in the influence of canons regular on parochial service is, in some respects, hardly surprising as the numbers of these professing the religious life would appear to have been steadily dropping during this period. Consequently, large numbers of canons would not be available for parochial duties, if conventual life was to be maintained. This factor, allied to an increase in favour towards the secular clergy was almost bound to lead to a reaction against the service of parish churches by regulars.¹⁰

Even when a regular held a vicarage, however, certain doubts must be raised as to whether the canon was actually serving the cure, or not.

¹ *CPR—Letters*, x 504.

² *Ibid.*, x 563.

³ *Ibid.*, xiii 295.

⁴ *Dryburgh*, nos. 38, 40.

⁵ *CPR—Letters*, xiii 310-11.

⁶ *Supra*, p. 223.

Prot. Book of John Robesone (1558-63) (GRH), fo. 32; PRO, 31/9-33, Diver-

⁷ sorum, Paul III (1543-5) fo. 122.

⁸ *CPR—Letters*, xii 296-7.

⁹ *Register of the Secret Seal*, iii, no. 3030.

¹⁰ The increase in favour of the secular clergy is seen in the foundation and endowment of collegiate churches.

In certain cases, it is evident that a canon was serving in person, and it was reported in one instance that the canon of Holyrood who served the vicarage of Kirkconnel was "living in the house of the parish church."¹ Elsewhere, especially when the church served by a canon was at some distance from the monastery itself, similar arrangements must have prevailed.² In other instances, where church and foundation were close, no doubt the canon stayed within the precincts of the monastery when not engaged in his parochial duties.

Irrespective of whether he stayed at the church, or the monastery, however, the beneficed canon was expected to maintain a regular connection with his house, retaining his voice in chapter and being summoned back to attend visitations, and to take part in elections.³ Nevertheless, a canon serving a church far from his monastery must have found it very difficult, not only to maintain his links with his house, but also to square his spiritual dictates with his parochial duties. One canon-vicar at least, that of Balmaghie, of which the revenues were annexed to Holyrood, found this struggle too much for him, and resigned his charge because he could not live there *tanquam bonus catholicus et religiosus vir*, and was desirous to be re-admitted to the monastery.⁴

Such examples show canons to have been serving cures in person, but it is far from certain that this was always so, and at times, canons may have been little more than titular vicars who, at an early period, ensured that the vicarage revenues would accrue to their house, and nearer the sixteenth century, possibly held such revenues for their personal profit.⁵ In either case, a chaplain or curate would actually undertake the parochial duties. The existence of such an assistant would certainly explain such cases as that of John Makaw, canon of Holyrood, vicar of Urr and arch-deacon of Lismore, who almost certainly did not serve his cure in person,⁶ nor likewise, at a slightly later date, another canon-vicar of Urr, Alexander Smebard, who is found in spiritual charge of Holyrood in the absence of the commendator.⁷

Other canon-vicars, such as that of Dollar maintained a curate,⁸ as did the canon of Scone who served Logie, and its pendicles of Liff and

¹ CPR—*Letters*, ix 471.

² *Scottish Supplications to Rome*, i 81-2.

³ *Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia*, no. 614 (cited, Colvin, *The White Canons in England*, 284).

⁴ *Prot. Book of James Young*, no. 859.

⁵ Books of Assumption (GRH), fos. 101, 101v, 119.

⁶ Prot. Book of John Robeson (GRH), fo. 56a.

⁷ GRH, Ch. no. 1749 (a).

⁸ Books of Assumption, fos. 102, 314-5.

Invergowrie.¹ This practice was indeed in accordance with a principle laid down by David de Bernham, bishop of St. Andrews in 1242, when on confirming the rights of the canons of Dryburgh to serve certain vicarages, he stipulated that in each church so served there was to be "some secular priest of good repute . . . by whose assistance the vicar may be relieved and aided."² Such curates may on occasions have been genuinely used as assistants, but it is more probable that by the sixteenth century they were shouldering the full burden of parochial duties.

Whether, the actual parochial work was being undertaken by a canon or not, it is obvious that the bulk of the fruits, which should have gone to the parochial incumbent, after the appropriating body had taken its share, were now being diverted without the necessity of obtaining a formal vicarage appropriation. It is not always clear, however, to whom the vicarage revenues were being diverted, and to what extent the canon who served the cure was allowed to share in its profits. In theory, the revenues should have accrued to the religious house of which the canon was a member, and the canon was expected to account to his abbot or prior for the fruits of his benefice, while a suitable portion would be set aside for his support.³

At first, this practice would appear to have prevailed in Scotland, and in 1447, one canon, who was only receiving such a maintenance allowance, complained that, although his parish of Kirkmaiden in Rhinns was large and populous, he only received three pounds per year for his cure.⁴ Nevertheless, as the initial strictness was relaxed, and even conventual brethren obtained private portions, it is obvious that a beneficed canon might well expect his vicarage fruits, or at least a major share of them. That, the entire fruits of vicarages were, in certain cases, being granted to a canon is evident, as far as Scotland is concerned, at the period of the Reformation when at the Assumption of the Benefices, vicarage valuations are being given up by individual canons and not by corporations.⁵ This practice was possibly not widespread, however, and the compromise contained in a fifteenth century supplication, whereby canon-vicars were receiving part of the fruits, was more likely the norm.⁶

¹ Prot. Book of Duncan Gray (GRH), fo. 6.

² *Dryburgh*, nos. 38-9.

³ *Les Statuts de Premontre*, 124 n (cited, Colvin, *The White Canons in England*, 284). Adam of Dryburgh writing on the obligations of a White Canon rejects any idea of a canon being permitted to retain the fruits of his own labour (*De Ord.* (*Patrologiae Latinae*, 198, coll. 518-43) cited, Bulloch, *Adam of Dryburgh*, 92).

⁴ *CPR—Letters*, x 275.

⁵ Books of Assumption, fos. 101, 101v, 119.

⁶ Reg. of Supplications, 659 fo. 63v.

To date, only the position of canons regular serving parish churches has been considered for, as we have seen,¹ monks were from a very early period, forbidden to exercise parochial duties. The Council of Poitiers in 1100 had forbidden such duties to monks, and other dictates in a similar vein had quickly followed. The system under which monks lived was, moreover, designed to discipline men to a cloistered corporate life, and not to enable them to serve the cure of souls.

It is, therefore, unlikely that as long as the monastic ideal remained alive, as it did in Scotland, during the course of the twelfth century, that churches would be served by monks. Nevertheless, as discipline became slacker in the monasteries, it is evident that a few parish churches came to be served by monks. The Cistercians in particular appear to have had no strong objections to undertaking parochial responsibilities, although initially the order had even opposed the holding of parochial revenues.² Thus, the church of Kirkgunzeon had been served, before the Schism severed the connection, by a monk from the Cistercian house of Holmcultram,³ while in 1277, the abbey of Sweetheart was allowed to serve the parish in which it stood—Lochkinderloch, by one of its own number, this practice continuing at the Reformation.⁴ In this concession, moreover, one can discern the key to the problem of service by monks, as such concessions normally applied to the parish in which the house itself stood, and it would seem to have been according to this principle that Cistercians appear to have served at Balmerino, Culross, Dundrennan, Glenluce and Melrose.⁵

Amongst other orders, a monk of Lindores served the parish of Abdie in which the abbey lay,⁶ while the monks of Ardchattan served their own parish church.⁷ The sacristans of Coldingham and Dunfermline were also vicars of their respective parochial charges, but in both these cases the actual parochial duties were almost certainly deputed to a secular curate.⁸ The strong possibility indeed exists that in a majority of such cases, the monk was in fact a titular vicar, and the work was deputed. A monk holding the fruits of a vicarage, in lieu of, or to supplement, his portion is a strong possibility; a monk engaged in parochial duties is a much

¹ *Supra*, p. 216.

² This question was the subject of dispute between Bernard of Clarivau and Peter the Venerable of Cluny (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 189, col. 141).

³ *CPR—Petitions*, i 576.

⁴ GRH. Vat. Trans. II, no. 10; *CPR—Letters*, iv. 251.

⁵ Register of the Secret Seal, lxii, fo. 188v; Melrose, no. 496.

⁶ Reg. of Presentations to Benefices (GRH), ii, fo. 162.

⁷ *Scottish Supplications to Rome*, I 175.

⁸ *Dunfermelyn*, no. 444; Reg. of Privy Council, i. 246-7; Reg. of Supplications, 263, fo. 134v.

greater rarity. In either case, the practice was not widespread, and the total absence of protests about the service of churches by monks testifies to its infrequency.

Protests were not infrequent, however, about the service of parochial cures by canons regular, most of those onslaughts coming from the not disinterested secular priests, who found ready support from both bishops and influential laymen. As already noted, the Bishop of Dunkeld took the abbey of Inchcolm to task over its annexed church of Dalgety, the vicarage of which they were attempting to have served by one of their own canons.¹ Elsewhere, it was laymen who were instrumental in complaining about the injustice of having a regular as vicar. Thus, the nobles and parishioners of Falkirk complained that the vicarage of their church, which was ruled and governed by a canon of Holyrood, "having permission to live abroad for the purpose" was "not befittingly enough served in spiritualities." On these grounds, they petitioned that the cure of souls might be committed, as formerly, to a secular priest, and the canon sent back to the monastery.² Such charges appear to have been fairly frequent, and one of particular interest, which illustrates the poor relations between regulars and seculars, concerns the church of Holy Trinity—St. Andrews. The church, having been transferred to its present site by William Lindsay, lord of Byres, with consent of the priory of St. Andrews; his son, John Lindsay wished to convert into a collegiate church. This attempt failed, possibly because John wished to have the patronage transferred to himself, but what is of more import, in spite of the fact that supplications are notoriously unreliable, is that one of the reasons advanced for making this change was that, while the chaplains were seculars, the vicar was a canon regular and discords arose daily in canonical hours and services.³

While it can be argued, therefore, that the canon-vicar did not detract from parochial life, and indeed with his status and possible educational attainments added lustre to a cure, it is equally arguable that owing to constant friction between regulars and seculars, any such good might easily be undone. In the nature of the evidence, the canon-vicar is almost bound to appear in a bad light, but positive evidence in favour of the regulars is virtually non-existent. Anselm of Havelberg, himself a white canon, may have thought, as did others, that all parish priests should be regulars,⁴ but experience was not to prove that regulars were any more conscientious

¹ *Supra*, pp. 222-3.

² *Scottish Supplications to Rome*, i. 81-2.

³ *Reg. of Supplications*, 286, fo. 221.

⁴ *Epistola apologetica pro ordine canonicorum regularium* (*Patrologia Latina*, vol. 188, col. 112-40); cited. Bulloch, *Adam of Dryburgh*, 58.

than the seculars, either in ministration in their parishes, or in the upkeep of their churches. Indeed, as canon-vicars were subject to two masters—their diocesan and their abbot or prior, to whom they should report at frequent intervals, it is possible that their parochial work consequently suffered. It is doubtful, furthermore, how far regulars were undertaking their duties in person, and how far deputing them to underpaid curates. All in all, the canon-vicar was, however, possibly no worse than the secular vicar, many of whose faults he displayed, but as this judgement in itself is to damn with faint praise, one is drawn to the inevitable conclusion that the cure of souls by regulars could only have been successful in the eyes of the religious themselves.